1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

It is not suggested that the conscious element is entirely absent from the Vedda possession dances, it is impossible to believe that such a sudden collapse as that occurring in the Henebedda *kirikoraha* ceremony (p. 222) (when Kande Yaka in the person of the shaman shoots the sambar deer), followed by an almost instantaneous recovery, is entirely non-volitional. and the same holds good for the pig-spearing in the Bambura Yaka ceremony (p. 243) at Sitala Wanniya. We believe that these facts can be fully accounted for by a partial abolition of the will, that is to say, by a dulling of volition far short of complete unconsciousness. The shaman in fact surrenders himself to the dance in the fullest sense, and it is this, combined with a high degree of sub-conscious expectancy, which leads him to enact almost automatically and certainly without careful forethought the traditional parts of the dance in their conventionally correct order. Further, the assistant, who follows every movement of the dancer, prepared to catch him when he falls, may also greatly assist by conscious or unconscious suggestion in the correct performance of these complicated possession dances. Again, we do not think there can be any doubt as to the non-volitional nature of the possession, by the *yaka*, of the bystanders, near relatives of the dead man, which may take place during the *Nae Yaku* ceremony[1].

One remarkable fact may be chronicled here, viz. that we have never met a Vedda who had seen the spirit of a dead man, that is to say, no Vedda ever saw a ghost, at least in his waking hours. We have never been able to obtain any corroborative evidence for Bailey's assertion that "the spirits [of the dead] appear to them in dreams and tell them [the Veddas] where to hunt." Veddas certainly dream, but Handuna and his son-in-law Kaira, two most trustworthy informants, said that they did

[1] There was nothing about the general behaviour of any of the Veddas with whom we came in contact that suggested a specially neurotic or hysterical tendency. The graver stigmata of hysteria such as would warrant a diagnosis of functional disease were always absent and the Veddas, even when ill, were in no sense fuss makers or inclined to magnify their ailments in the way so many Melanesians do. We are indebted to Dr C. S. Myers for the suggestion that possession by the *yaku* can best be explained as an affection (dissociation) of altered personality. If this be so the condition is comparable to a number of well-known cases in the sphere of mental pathology.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

it is only because, after repeated and careful inquiry, I cannot establish the fact of such a marriage now actually existing, that I am inclined to consider that it is becoming obsolete. But I should be almost justified as describing it as an existing custom, for many of the young men are the offspring of such connections. The practice is spoken of by them in the present tense, and alluded to as a matter of course, without the smallest repugnance.*

Amongst the Bintenne Veddahs, then, it may be said to have been, for perhaps two generations or so, extinct. Amongst those of Nilgala it is, at most, only becoming so. And it has, undoubtedly, been the custom among both from time immemorial. Utterly revolting as it is to us, we must remember that with them it was a custom sanctioned by the practice of ages. It is not the consequence of a "poor community," nor the growth of mere barbarism. If it were, the elder sister would be equally sought after; if it were, polygamy in all its forms would be found among them. There would, in fact, be no restraint.†

I have before described the short stature of the Veddahs—their weak and vacant expression, their striking resemblance to each other, characteristics much more marked upon the Veddahs of Nilgala than those of Bintenne. The practice I have just noticed is quite sufficient to account for these.

It might naturally be supposed that such marriages would produce, besides a stunted growth, insanity, idiocy, and epilepsy. But I find few traces of these maladies. Madness rarely occurs, idiocy still less frequently; though dogged stupidity is not at all uncommon amongst them.‡ But in other respects the injurious effects of this custom would seem to be plainly discernible. The

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* I am not surprised that Tennent should be ignorant of this custom. It is a most difficult task to obtain intelligible answers to the commonest questions from these ignorant creatures; and unless a clue to some subject is accidentally found, the inquirer would learn little. There are practices as revolting, though not so peculiar, among some of the Indian tribes.

† It is curious that the only trace I can find of anything approaching to a belief in retributive justice is a tradition of a man, whose name even has been preserved, and whose family still exists, who, they say, was eaten by worms for having exceeded the authorized limit, and formed connections with his elder sisters and aunts. By whom this punishment was inflicted they do not pretend to say; but the painful death they regard as the direct consequence of his incest.

‡ Madness is by no means common among them. They believe if one man curse another, the man who is cursed becomes mad. This is evidently the same superstition as is common among the Singhalese, and known as the "Kata waha," "the evil mouth," or "poison of the mouth," equivalent to the prevalent faith in the "Ess waha," "the evil eye," or "poison of the eye." Burton, in his *El Medinah Mecca*, says, "the national type has been preserved by systematic intermarriages. No evil results are anticipated from the union of first cousins; and the experience of ages and of a nation may be trusted."